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Korean Study Abroad Students: Identification and Beyond

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ABSTRACT

Study abroad has become a permanent addition to the Korean education spectrum, but the existing research has not addressed the differences that exist between the subgroups within the Korean study abroad community. This study explores how Korean study abroad students construct their identity during the course of their study abroad in the United States, using the social identity theory and the concepts of the Other, in-group/out-group, identity practice and identity performance. The main argument of this thesis is two-folds: 1) The students' identity and group affiliation shifts in response to social context, commonly between the first and second stages of study abroad; 2) While the students' identity may be aligned with their in-group, their identity performance shifts depending on spatial and social context. The argument is based on data collected through unstructured interviews with eight undergraduate students at Duke University who have graduated from different types of high schools in Korea and the United States.

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INTRODUCTION

Three stickers summarize ten years of my life: Visa stamps from the United States of America on my Korean passport. I am a study abroad student. I have lived in Orinda, California with my mom and my siblings as a *kirogi* family,¹ attended a boarding school in Ojai, California with seventy classmates (two of which were Korean), and came to Duke as one of about thirty Korean international students in my class. These ten years in America include my childhood, the entirety of my adolescence as well as my early adulthood, and this wide spectrum plausibly explains why my experiences signified by each visa have been drastically different. And yet, in all three cases, I was labeled by one title: Korean international student.²

Global Context: Why is South Korea Important?

With the rising connectivity and the ease of transportation, the past three decades have seen a remarkable growth in the rising numbers of international student migration. In 1975, there were only 0.8 million students globally who were enrolled in tertiary education outside of their home country; in 2011, there were 4.3 million students who were studying abroad. Even when noting the increasing

¹ *Kirogi* families refer to families where one parent resides in Korea to provide financial support while the other parent accompanies the child(ren) abroad to provide physical support

² Although the common term is “international student”, hereafter in this thesis I will consistently use the term “study abroad student” as it better captures the true study abroad population regardless of the students’ citizenship. The term “international” also has limitations in the sense that it is unfitting to mark students as such once they have returned to their home country, whereas the term “study abroad student” accurately describes them even after they return home as it describes their mobility without immediately linking their foreignness.

number of students in tertiary education, this 537.5% growth is representative of the profound impact globalization has had on education.

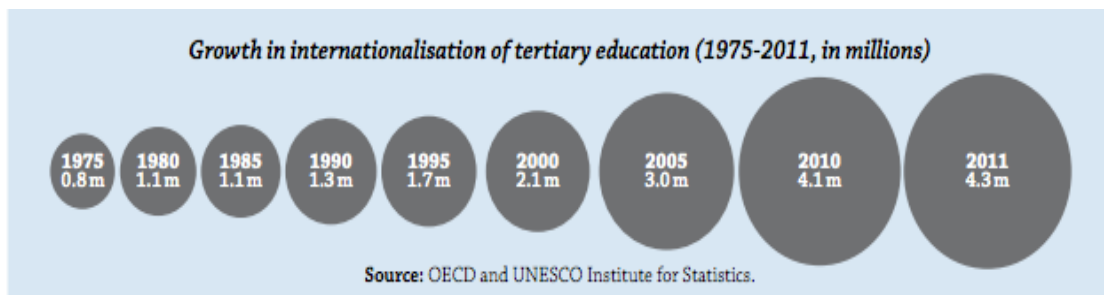


Figure 1: Long-term Growth in the Number of Student Enrolled Outside Their Country of Citizenship. *Source: OECD Education at a Glance 2013.*

When observing the countries of origin and destination, however, it is apparent that the study abroad trend is not an equal exchange between all players. In 2011, 42% of the students studying abroad chose an English speaking country (United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada and New Zealand) as the country of destination, reflecting the importance of the English language as a decisive factor in study abroad.

Even among the English speaking countries, it is necessary to focus on the United States due to the sheer size of the country's role in the global education exchange as the top destination for international students- in 2011, the United States attracted 16.5% of the total foreign students. The aforementioned gap in educational exchange becomes only more apparent when comparing the top countries of origin amongst foreign students in the US and those countries' share of the total exchange.

During the 2010-2011 school year, 73,351 South Korean students studied abroad in the United States, while only 2,487 American students studied abroad in

Korea. In fact, only 1.5% of the total study abroad students chose South Korea as the destination, which is a small fraction (1/11, to be exact) of the United States' 16.5%. The scale of this imbalance is better contextualized when examining the following table regarding the top countries of origin for international students in the United States.

Table 1: International Student Population by Country

	Place of Origin	2011/12	2012/13	% of Total
Rank	World Total	764,495	819,644	100
1	China	194,029	245,597	28.7
2	India	100,270	96,754	11.8
3	South Korea	72,295	70,627	8.6

(Adapted from IIE Open Doors Report 2012 "Fast Facts")

The fact that South Korea, with a population of 49 million, ranks third in the country of origin for international students in the United States, is only more astounding when comparing South Korea's socio-educational status quo against that of China and India. First, on a demographic comparison, both countries have populations of over 1 billion, over twenty times South Korea's 50 million. Although all three countries are in Asia, there is a great gap in the GDP per capita, with South Korea's \$22,590 greatly outnumbering India's \$1,489 and even China's \$6,091. As a member of the OECD, South Korea has consistently performed highly on the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA),³ and boasts a 97% gross

³ The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is "an international assessment that measures 15-year-old students' reading, mathematics, and science literacy." (U.S. Department of Education, "National Center for Educational Statistics," accessed April 5, 2014, <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/>.)

secondary school enrollment rate versus China's 81% and India's 63%.⁴ In fact, even when lined up with OECD peers (which does not include China and India), Korea ranks third in expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP at 7.6%, with only Denmark and Iceland investing a larger percentage (7.9% and 7.7%, respectively) of their GDP on education. When considering these statistics- the fact that Korea has a significantly smaller population with a stronger infrastructure and investment in local education- it leads to a surprise that South Korea sends 7 students for every 10 students that India sends to America. All facts point to one conclusion: there is a unique, unrivaled trend of studying abroad in South Korea, one that cannot be explained by the global increase in international students alone.

Historical Background: Education for Glory and Independence

There are varied explanations as to why such a phenomenon exists, but there is one unanimous agreement: it is driven by Korea's exceptional dedication to education. Although education is universally "valued as a means of self-cultivation and as a way to achieve status and power,"⁵ Korea's fervor for education is unique in its historic ties in Confucian ideals during the Joseun Dynasty (1392-1910).⁶ In

⁴ The World Bank, "School Enrollment, Secondary (% Gross) ," accessed April 9, 2014, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.ENRR>.

⁵ Michael J. Seth, *Korean Education: A Philosophical and Historical Perspective*, The Elliott School of International Affairs at The George Washington University: The Sigur Center for Asian Studies, 2005.

⁶ While Confucianism originates in China, the anti-Confucian campaign during the Cultural Revolution had purged the country of Confucian teachings, while it persisted in Korea. (Merle Goldman, 1975, China's anti-Confucian campaign, 1973-74, *The China Quarterly*, no. 63: 435-462, accessed April 15, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/652749>.)

particular, I point to two Confucian thoughts prevalent during the Joseun Dynasty, *yipsinyangmyeong* (입신양명) and *sungmunjuui* (승문주의). *Yipsinyangmeyong* is the Korean pronunciation of an excerpt from Confucius' Classic of Filial Piety, in the preface of which it is emphasized that "to make our name famous in future ages and thereby glorify our parents, this is the end of filial piety." Among the *yangban* (양반) aristocracy of the Joseun society –whose men were the only group who studied these texts and were literate- honorable fame was only attainable through top marks on the *gwago* (과거), a civic examination based on seven Chinese classics.⁷ Consequently, *sungmunjuui* –meaning that *mun* (문; academia, specifically referring to the Chinese classics) was held in higher regard than *mu* (무; military skills)- became a societal norm for the elite.⁸ When the Gabo Reforms in 1894 officially ended class restrictions for governmental positions by allowing all classes to sit for the civic examinations, members of the *jungin* (중인; literally meaning "middle man") middle class strived for upward social mobility through education. During the Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945), non-Confucian "modern" education began to rise in importance, promoted by independence activists who were influenced by social Darwinism.⁹ This group argued that "only through widespread acquisition of modern education could Koreans become qualified to regain their independence,"

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Indeed, this is a distinct difference from the Shogunate (samurai-ruled) system in Japan during the same period.

⁹ Clark W. Sorensen, "Success and Education in South Korea," *Comparative Education Review* 38, no. 1, Special Issue on Schooling and Learning in Children's Lives (February 1994): 15, accessed April 14, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1189287>.

thus linking nationalism with education.¹⁰ Consequently, middle and lower class Koreans had a century-long history of viewing educational excellence as a means of success.

The post-colonial years marked the beginnings of study abroad, hastened by the gap deliberately created by the departure of the Japanese instructors¹¹ and the destructed educational infrastructure in the aftermath of the Korean War (1950-1953). Study abroad in this early times was focused on the United States because the military presence in Seoul allowed the US and English to rise in their influence. However, starting in 1953, the Korean government began to place restrictions on students by mandating a governmental approval for study abroad, fearing that it will develop into a symbol of class bifurcation between those who could afford the foreign education and those who could not. The pre-requisites for study abroad included a college degree (2-year degree for sciences and a 4-year degree for humanities) and the passage of a qualification exam. Although there were efforts from 1953 to send students to a wider variety of countries, 87.6% of the 11,355 study abroad students from 1953~1971 went to the United States, again confirming the country's prominence as a destination.¹² Starting in 1977, the government began to award national scholarships for a small group of exceptional students¹³, but the

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ During the colonial years, all schools were taught solely in Japanese, and consequently the majority of the teachers were ethnic Japanese. (Sorenson, "Success and Education in South Korea," 15.)

¹² Doopedia, "Study Abroad," accessed April 14, 2014, <http://terms.naver.com/entry.nhn?docId=1132905&cid=2000000000&categoryId=200000250> [all quotations in Korean have been translated by the author].

¹³ The national scholarship was awarded to 18 students in 1977, and was gradually expanded to 50 students in 1978, 100 students in 1979, and so on. After

doors still remained shut for the vast majority of students. It was only in 1981, with the rapid economic development and an increasing demand for self-funded study abroad, that the government loosened its restrictions.

“Globalize, or Perish!”: Roots of Present-day Study Abroad



Figure 2: Frog in a Well. *Source:* Iyagikaeneun Gwangbu Kimgiuk-ui Storytelling Yeonguso [Story-excavating Miner Kim Giuk's Storytelling Lab] <http://zepe.tistory.com/1078>)

There is an ancient Chinese proverb about an ignorant frog that takes extreme pride in his small well, blind to the wonders of the outside world. It is only when a turtle comes and speaks of the sea that the frog realizes how limited his world-view had been. Situated on a peninsula with three sides facing the sea and the north blocked off by a hostile brother, South Korea is physically isolated from

the criticism on the loose management of the national scholars and their reluctance to return to Korea, the program was reevaluated and downsized. (Ibid.)

the world. This geographic isolation consequently installed a fear of becoming a “frog.”

As a peninsula situated between present day China and Japan, Korea had traditionally served the geographic role as a gateway linking the countries. However, during the late Joseun dynasty, observing the Western influence on neighboring countries, it embraced a seclusion policy that earned it the nickname of the “hermit kingdom.”¹⁴ Even as Japan was forced to open its ports to Commodore Perry in 1853, Joseun remained in its self-isolation.¹⁵ After Japan forcefully opened Joseun’s ports in 1876, however, there was a sentiment that this isolationist policy had caused Joseun to fall behind in terms of acquiring the latest technology and knowledge, which allowed for Japanese rule. I point to this sentiment as the onset of the “Frog in a Well” syndrome, where Koreans are constantly in pursuit of acquiring knowledge and “seeing the sea” beyond the small “well” of their peninsula. In reality, Korea’s “English Fever” can also be understood as an extension of the “Frog in a well” syndrome, as parents and students view English as a necessity to succeed in the international market. As the prominent Asian studies scholar Nancy Abelmann has stated, “Education abroad [became] but another piece of the education puzzle as

¹⁴ Asia for Educators, Columbia University, “Korea: The Choson (Yi) Dynasty (1392-1910),” accessed April 9, 2014, http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/kpct/kp_choson.htm.

¹⁵ The Korean Christian Museum at Soongsil University, “National Isolation Policy and the Rejection of Heterodoxy,” last modified November 26, 2010, accessed April 9, 2014, http://www.ssu.ac.kr/web/museumeng/exhibit_a_04_04.

South Korean parents attempt to prepare their children to prosper in an ever more competitive and globalized South Korea and world.”¹⁶

If the overarching education fever was rooted in Confucianism and the post-colonial desire for national and social prestige, the current study abroad phenomenon was ultimately fueled by globalization. Korea’s globalization initiatives become a national priority during the Kim Young Sam Administration (1993-1998), where globalization was “no longer a matter of choice but one of necessity- globalize or perish!”¹⁷ Globalization became a “new national identity badge for a state aspiring to advanced world-class status,”¹⁸ and nurturing students with global competency became the utmost priority in Korean society. While the economic and cultural impact of globalization was certainly not unique to South Korea, Korea’s pursuit of global competency paved way for the two largest drivers of study abroad: 1) obtaining a “world-class” education and 2) becoming fluent in English, the lingua franca.

In the 2012-2013 school year, 70,627 Korean citizen students were registered under student visas in the United States alone¹⁹; as one of the 70,627, I have a personal attachment and insight on the topic of Korean study abroad

¹⁶ Jiyeon Kang and Nancy Abelman, "The Domestication of South Korean Pre-College Study Abroad in the First Decade of the Millennium," *Journal of Korean Studies* 16, no. 1 (2011): 90.

¹⁷ Samuel S. Kim, *Korea's Globalization*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Institute of International Education, 2013. "Open Doors Fact Sheet: South Korea," accessed April 14, 2014, <http://www.iie.org/~media/Files/Corporate/Open-Doors/Fact-Sheets-2013/Country/South%20Korea-Open-Doors-2013.ashx>.

students in America. Looking back on my ten years of study abroad, I now realize that although I have come to “study”, I have gained much more than mere academic knowledge- for the better or for worse, my study abroad experience had a tremendous impact on shaping my identity, beliefs, and behavior. This realization then piqued my interest in the experiences of my peers, other Korean study abroad students who come from different backgrounds. How were their study abroad experiences and trajectory different from mine, and from each other’s? Did spending their childhood, teenage or early adulthood years in America have an impact shaping their identities and behavior, and more importantly, how did the students narrate this impact? With these questions in mind, I interviewed eight undergraduate students at Duke University.²⁰

Study Overview

Chapter One is an overview of the literature, theoretical background, and methodology that developed and guided my study. I situate my research within the existing scholarship on Korean study abroad students, especially focusing on the limited number of ethnographic studies on student identity. I then present an overview of existing socio-psychological studies on identity to define ethnic and social identity theories that serve as the theoretical background, and also introduce the key concepts of othering, markedness and identity practice/performance that will be used in my analysis. I end the chapter with an overview of the research methodology, which also includes subject profiles in table form.

²⁰ Detailed methodology will be explained in Chapter One.

In Chapter Two, I first introduce various subgroups within the Korean study abroad population for the reader's benefit. With the categories established, I then present and analyze student narratives to reveal that the majority of the students experience a shift in in-group vs. out-group identification in response to changing social contexts, most commonly between their first and second stages of study abroad. Othering –the process of adequation and distinction- is fluid and context-specific, and students identify both groups outside the Korean community (e.g. Caucasian Americans), and subgroups of the Korean study abroad student population (e.g. *yuhakseng*, Korean Americans)²¹ as the out-group.

Finally, in Chapter Three, I connect the in-group/out-group construct with the students' identity practice by establishing that the students' identification of the in-group has a direct correlation with their identity practice. From there, I argue that identity performance is separate from identity practice in that it is a conscious behavior decision that shifts based on social context. Students engage in identity performance to affiliate themselves with the in-group, but also for a variety of reasons arising out of specific contexts, ranging from asserting a Korean identity, maximizing personal gain, and projecting a positive image of Korea to balancing two identities. In other words, student narratives have shown that identity performance occurs for both a spatial context as well as a societal context, as they navigate between Korea-America, home-school, and personal-professional boundaries.

²¹ These terms will be explained in the "Terminology" section of Chapter Two.

CHAPTER ONE: SCHOLARLY BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, I will first situate my research in the existing literature on Korean study abroad students to reveal the gap I will address through my research design. While there are numerous studies on the merits and flaws of South Korea's education exodus, there is a limited number of studies focusing on the students' own narratives. Through the literature review, I identify two major gaps within the current terrain of scholarship on Korean study abroad students: a thematic gap of self-identity formation, and a methodological gap of longitudinal study. I then review the socio-psychological theories on identity to provide the theoretical background, and define "othering," "markedness," "identity practice" and "identity performance," which are all critical concepts in analyzing students' narratives. Lastly, I end the chapter with an overview of the research methodology, which introduces the participants and segues into the next two chapters, which are both interview analysis.

Literature Review

Review of Studies on Korean Study Abroad Students

With biographies and media touting success cases of study abroad returnees, it appears possible that educational and cultural benefits of study abroad overshadow potential side effects in the minds of ambitious parents and young students. Contrary to popular media, however, the complexity and ambiguity of outcomes of study abroad is an issue that has certainly been well explored by

scholars, especially in the fields of developmental psychology, sociology, human development and even public policy. Some of the key findings have suggested that the success of study abroad, especially early study abroad (ESA), directly correlates with the duration as well as the student's command of English²²; children may struggle with their linguistic identity and cultural identity²³; parent-child relations may be affected for students in *kirogi* families²⁴ as well as home-stay environments.²⁵ The purpose of my study is not to contest the fact that such complexities exist, but rather to build off of this established understanding to focus on the students' experiences and the corresponding impact on identity formation.

The existing ethnographic studies on Korean study abroad students, although limited, were pivotal in shaping my research. One common theme across multiple studies was the impact of study abroad on identity development, focusing on how

²² Tae-Oh Yoon, *Road to Success for Early Study Abroad in America*, Interstudy: 2004.

²³ Jin Sook Choi, "Chodeungdangye Yeongeojogi Yuhageul Hago Gwigukan Haksaengdeurui Hakbumopokeoseugeurup Interview [Focus Group Interview for the Parents of the Students Who have Returned to Korea After Early English Learning in Foreign Countries]," *Eoneohak [the Linguistic Association of Korea Journal]* 15, no. 2 (2007): 77-98.

²⁴ Eun Kyung Yun and Sung Hee Shin, "Keopeulgwangyejaryo Bunseokbangbeobe Uihan Gireogi Eommawa Janyeoui Jaajonjunggamgwamo-Janyeo Uisasotongi Chogi, Hugi Cheongsongyeongwa Eommaui Uure Michineun Yeonghyang [the Actor Effect and the Partner Effect of Self-Esteem and Mother-Adolescent Communication on Depression in Mothers and Adolescents in Kirogi Families According to Adolescent's Development Stage]," *J Korean Acad Nurs* 40, no. 5 (2010): 620-30; Juyoung Song, "Imagined Communities and Language Socialization Practices in Transnational Space: A Case Study of Two Korean "Study Abroad" Families in the United States," *The Modern Language Journal* 96, no. 4 (2012): 507-24.

²⁵ Youngwoo Park, "Miguk Jogiyuhagui Siltae: Munhwajeok Simnijeok Cheungmyeoneul Jungsimeu-Ro [A Study of the Early Study Abroad in the U.S.: Focusing on the Cultural and Psychological Perspectives]," *Gyoyukangnyeongu [Korean Journal of Educational Research]* 51, no. 2 (2013): 255-77.

study abroad students navigated between two cultures.²⁶ The terminology used - 'third culture kids,'²⁷ borderlands identity,²⁸ bicultural identity²⁹- varied, suggesting the need for a cohesive construct. However, the studies nonetheless confirmed that cultural identity formation was an integral unifier across otherwise distinctive student experiences.

In 2009, Kyung Sook Moon and Chul Kyung Yoon, researchers at Korea's National Youth Policy Institute, conducted an ethnographic study with Jae Hoon Lim, an education scholar. Moon, Yoon and Lim fittingly adopted "third culture kids" (TCK), a terminology coined by Useem and popularized by Pollock and Van Reken, from its original analysis of international school students' identity to that of Korean study abroad students. Using Pollock's definition, a TCK is:

An individual who, having spent a significant part of the developmental years in a culture other than the parents' culture, develops a sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having

²⁶ Kyung Sook Moon, Jaehoon Lim, and Chul Kyung Yoon, *Jogiyuhak Cheongsonyeonui Simnisahoejeok Baldalgwa Jeongchaekbangannyeon-gul: Gwiguk Cheongsonyeonui Jeongcheseonge Gwanhan Jiljeok Yeon-Gu [Korean Early-Study-Abroad Youths' Social and Psychological Development and Policy Implications: Qualitative Investigation of Korean Returnee Students]*, (Seoul, South Korea: National Youth Policy Institution, 2009); Mun Woo Lee, "The Issues and Self-Perceptions of Korean Early Study-Abroad Undergraduates in the U.S.," *Ijungeoneohak [Bilingual Studies]* 43 (2010): 301-24; Park, "Miguk Jogiyuhagui Siltae: Munhwajeok Simnijeok Cheungmyeoneul Jungsimeu-Ro [A Study of the Early Study Abroad in the U.S.: Focusing on the Cultural and Psychological Perspectives]."

²⁷ Moon, Lim & Yoon, *Jogiyuhak Cheongsonyeonui Simnisahoejeok Baldalgwa Jeongchaekbangannyeon-gul: Gwiguk Cheongsonyeonui Jeongcheseonge Gwanhan Jiljeok Yeon-Gu [Korean Early-Study-Abroad Youths' Social and Psychological Development and Policy Implications: Qualitative Investigation of Korean Returnee Students]*.

²⁸ Lee, "The Issues and Self-Perceptions of Korean Early Study-Abroad Undergraduates in the U.S.".

²⁹ Park, "Miguk Jogiyuhagui Siltae: Munhwajeok Simnijeok Cheungmyeoneul Jungsimeu-Ro [A Study of the Early Study Abroad in the U.S.: Focusing on the Cultural and Psychological Perspectives]."

full ownership in any. Elements from each culture are incorporated into the life experience, but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar experience.³⁰

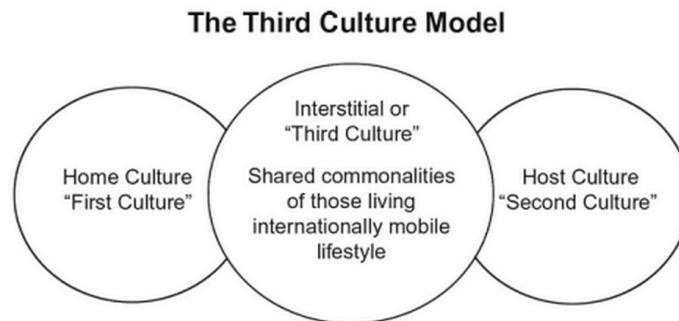


Figure 3: The Third Culture Model. *Source:* Pollock & Van Reken, 2009.

As illustrated in Figure 3, their study also acknowledged the inevitable marginalization of the third culture kids, but added that the formation of a segregated community occurs in all cultures (e.g. American Bubble, Miniature Japan). Their findings also showed that a high affiliation with the TCK sub-culture hindered students from linguistic development as well as cultural understanding, nullifying some of the main benefits of study abroad.³¹

Mun Woo Lee, a language education specialist, examined 22 Korean undergraduate students in an American university using a qualitative analysis of structured interviews, with the purpose of studying the students' self perceptions in relation to their first language and second language as well as their motherland and

³⁰ David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken. *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up among Worlds*. Nicholas Brealey Publishing, 2009, 13.

³¹ Moon, Lim & Yoon, *Jogiyuhak Cheongsonyeonui Simnisahoejeok Baldalgwa Jeongchaekbangannyeon-gul: Gwiguk Cheongsonyeonui Jeongcheseonge Gwanhan Jiljeok Yeon-Gu* [Korean Early-Study-Abroad Youths' Social and Psychological Development and Policy Implications: Qualitative Investigation of Korean Returnee Students], 70-71.

United States. He borrowed Anzaldua's concept of "borderlands identity," which was grounded in Anzaldua's own experiences growing up in the U.S.-Mexico borderline. A borderlands identity refers to the alternative identity of people "who [belong] to at least two identities at the same time, but not being confused or hurt by it,"³² which accurately describes the students' navigation between the two cultures- they embraced their in-between status as a positive advantage.

Youngwoo Park, also an education specialist, explored the cultural and psychological challenges faced by Korean early study abroad students through an ethnographic study of eight students, three mothers and two guardians. His research focused on highlighting the negative consequences of early study abroad, particularly those stemming from a fragmented family where the father remains in Korea to work and the mother accompanies the children to America for their study abroad. The students expressed an inconsolable linguistic and cultural gap with the American students, and hinted at their American classmates' lack of *jeong* (정; a Korean word describing the complex emotional bondage between two people³³) as the reason why they preferred other Korean students. Despite this gap, however, Park applied Phinney and Dupont's bicultural identity theory to explain how the students also absorb aspects of the dominant culture while also retaining their Korean beliefs. This bicultural identity is also a source of internal struggle as they solitarily navigate this in-between status; one Korean study abroad student in the

³² Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1991), 11.

³³ Christopher K. Chung and Samson Cho, "Significance of "Jeong" in Korean Culture and Psychotherapy," accessed April 14, 2014, <http://www.prcp.org/publications/sig.pdf>.

study professed confusion over why his mother would urge him to pledge allegiance to the American flag out of “respect” – in this case, his unique bicultural identity is neither fully American nor Korean- he does not exhibit patriotism for America, but also does not understand the importance of respect in Korean culture.³⁴

Hee Young Choi, in his dissertation research, conducted a case narrative study of five Korean Early Study Abroad (ESA) students’ pre-college experiences to retrospectively examine its impact on their transition to higher education. Specifically, he claimed that the students experienced “severe sense of isolation and loneliness,”³⁵ and noted that a power structure between “mainstream” students and international students creates a strong bond amongst the marginalized group.³⁶

Through reviewing the existing scholarship on Korean study abroad students, I identified a methodology gap in longitudinal studies, as well a thematic gap in self-identity. While I was also unable to execute a longitudinal study, I hoped to recreate the possible shifts over time by having the students narrate their life experiences. Consequently, I have also decided to organize my analysis by student rather than my subthemes, so that the reader may also follow the longitudinal shift. The gap in self-identity studies led me to focus my analysis on “self” and “other” as well as self-perception and performance. Did these students themselves identify themselves

³⁴ Park, "Miguk Jogiyuhagui Siltae: Munhwajeok Simnijeok Cheungmyeoneul Jungsimeu-Ro [A Study of the Early Study Abroad in the U.S.: Focusing on the Cultural and Psychological Perspectives]," 267.

³⁵ Hee Young Choi, "Korean Diaspora in the Age of Globalization: Early Study Abroad (ESA) College Students in the Midwest," (Doctor of Philosophy in Secondary and Continuing Education, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012), ii.

³⁶ Ibid., 171.

through the in-between identity, and if so, how did this reflect on their behavior?

These were some of the initial questions I had when designing my study.

Key concepts and framework for identity studies

Ethnic Identity

Korea is an ethnically homogenous nation-state where national identity is synonymous with ethnic identity. In other words, it is only when the students come to America, the “melting pot” (or the “salad bowl”, to be more precise) that ethnic identity surfaces as a conscious thought as a result of contact with other ethnicities. Jean Phinney et al. explain ethnic identity as “embracing various aspects, including self-identification, feelings of belongingness and commitment to a group, a sense of shared values, and attitudes toward one’s own ethnic group.”³⁷ Ethnic identity is an integral part of adolescent development, as stated in Erik Erikson’s seminal theory of psychosocial development. Erikson categorizes the adolescent years (12-20) as a crucial “Identity vs. Role Confusion” stage where the youth must resolve “strong previous doubt of one’s ethnic and sexual identity.”³⁸ Failure to do so may lead individuals to become estranged and fall into confusion, which manifests itself through “long standing, delinquent and ‘borderline’ psychotic episodes.”³⁹ Phinney develops Erikson’s theory to define stages of ethnic identity development, which are as follows:

³⁷ Jean S. Phinney, "Stages of Ethnic Identity Development in Minority Group Adolescents," *The Journal of Early Adolescence* 9, no. 1-2 (1989): 34-49.

³⁸ Erik H. Erikson, *Identity, Youth, and Crisis* (New York: Norton, 1968), 131.

³⁹ Ibid.

1. *Diffusion*: Little or no exploration of one's ethnicity and no clear understanding of the issues.
2. *Foreclosure*: Little or no exploration of ethnicity, but apparent clarity about one's own ethnicity. Feelings about one's ethnicity may be either positive or negative, depending on one's socialization experiences.
3. *Moratorium*: Evidence of exploration, accompanied by some confusion about the meaning of one's own ethnicity.
4. *Achievement*: Evidence of exploration, accompanied by a clear, secure understanding and acceptance of one's own ethnicity.

(Adapted from Phinney)

Although this framework will not be directly applied to my analysis, it serves as evidence that there are multiple phases and shifts involved in one's ethnic identity formation.

Social Identity: In-group vs. Out-group

Many fields of study, ranging from sociology and psychology to philosophy, explore and define identity in different ways. In the context of my ethnographic research on identity formation during study abroad, it is most appropriate to then review the social identity theories of self-categorization⁴⁰ and social structure⁴¹ to guide the analysis.

John Turner, Penelope Oakes, S. Alexander Haslam and Craig McGarty, social psychologists, used self-categorization theory to explain that individuals use cognitive self-categories to define themselves "in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social

⁴⁰ John C. Turner et al., *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory* (Basil Blackwell, 1987).

⁴¹ Sheldon Stryker and Peter J. Burke, "The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 4, Special Millennium Issue on the State of Sociological Social Psychology (December 2000): 284-97, accessed April 15, 2014, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2695840>.

categories.”⁴² In other words, two categories (in-group, out-group) are formed and individuals use this to then define themselves in relation to *others*, and this “us” vs. “them” binary that is developed becomes a distinguishing factor from personal identity, which is limited to “me” vs. “others”. This concept is particularly pertinent to this study, as I will explore how the students position themselves in within the Korean community and the larger university by aligning themselves with different groups.

Sheldon Stryker, another social psychologist, presents another identity theory based on the external social structure and the structure of self. Building upon George Herbert Mead’s formula “Society shapes self shapes social behavior,”⁴³ Stryker proposes his own formula of “commitment shapes identity salience shapes role choice behavior.”⁴⁴ Identity salience is defined as “the probability that an identity will be invoked across a variety of situations, or alternatively across persons in a given situation.”⁴⁵ In other words, Stryker is arguing that being embedded in social relationships impacts what we choose to exhibit as our primary identity, which then impacts our behaviors as we perform the roles assigned to us in each social network. In a university specific context, Stryker found that students “seek new relationships that provide opportunities to behave in accord with highly salient identities held before entrance. . . changes in the salience of their identities

⁴² Turner et al., *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-Categorization Theory*, 454.

⁴³ Stryker and Burke, “The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory,” 285.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 286.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

occur when they are *unable* to find or use such opportunities.”⁴⁶ In the context of Korea study abroad students, this claim is particularly noteworthy as it potentially explains why students’ self-identity and experiences may shift during their years of studying abroad.

Process of Othering

Othering is a concept popularized by Edward Saïd, in which he states that the notion of the Other is used to both define the self and justify the subordination of the marginalized “other.”⁴⁷ In this thesis, I use the anthropological understanding of the Other, which is an extension of the aforementioned in-group and out-group. Lila Abu-Lughod, a prominent anthropologist, wrote, “Anthropologists, whose goal is “to make sense of differences” also constitute their “selves” in relation to an other, but do not view this other as “under attack.””⁴⁸ In using the term, it is not my intention to suggest that all students perceive the Other as inferior (although this may be true for some cases). Instead, I focus on the fact that the Other consists of perceived differences between two groups, making it complementary to the concept of in-group and out-group that are built upon perceived similarities.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 286-287.

⁴⁷ In Saïd’s *Orientalism*, the “self” was the West and the “other” was the Orient.

⁴⁸ Lila Abu-Lughod, “Writing against culture,” in *Recapturing anthropology: Working in the present*, ed. Richard G. Fox (Santa Fe, N.M.: School of American Research Press: Distributed by the University of Washington Press, 1991), 139.

Intra-Ethnic Othering

Prominent Korean scholar Nancy Abelman⁴⁹ defines the term “intra-ethnic othering” as “distancing oneself from co-ethnics.”⁵⁰ She used the term to describe intra-ethnic othering from the Korean American students’ standpoint, but this is easily applicable to the Korean students as well, as the othering is mutual. Abelman found that by “the second half of the first decade of the 2000s, many Korean Americans began to voice their distinction from “Korean Koreans,”⁵¹ and in this thesis I will shed light on the same phenomenon within the Korean study abroad student community. Consequently, othering becomes a two-tiered concept, embracing both the conventional inter-ethnic othering and the unique phenomenon of intra-ethnic othering.

Identity Practice and Performance

I borrow the concept of identity practice and performance from linguistic anthropologists Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall, who used these terminologies to explore language and identity. Identity practice stems from Pierre Bourdieu’s influential theory of practice, through which Bourdieu defines the term *habitus* as a “systems of dispositions,” which are “a way of being, a habitual state (especially of

⁴⁹ Nancy Abelman’s work focuses on the experiences of Korean American students. I have chosen to omit her work from the literature review to prevent the reader’s confusion between the Korean study abroad students who possess American citizenship and the Korean American immigrant students in Abelman’s study. See Nancy Abelman, *The Intimate University: Korean American Students and the Problems of Segregation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), for her excellent study.

⁵⁰ Nancy Abelman, “Undergraduate Korean Americans and “Korean Koreans” in the Millennial American University,” in *Koreans in America: History, Culture and Identity*, ed. Grace J. Yoo (San Diego: Cognella Academic Publishing, 2012), 1.

⁵¹ Ibid.

the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition, tendency, propensity or inclination*.⁵²

Applied to the concept of identity, established in previous sections, identity practice then refers to one's disposition towards a particular identity, one that is most salient. On the other hand, Bucholtz and Hall define performance as the "highly deliberate and self-aware social display" that occurs "not only on stage and under spotlights but in frequent and fleeting interactional moments throughout daily life."⁵³ I adapt these terms to explore the Korean and American identities of my subjects and evaluate the degrees to which each practice and perform the multiple identities available to them.

Markedness

In some cases, the students wished to perform one identity, but struggled to do so because of linguistic and cultural barriers. These barriers are a result of "markedness," a concept that scholars define as "the process whereby some social categories gain a special, default status that contrasts with the identities of other groups, which are usually highly recognizable; Marked identities are also ideologically associated with marked language: linguistic structures or practices that differ from the norm."⁵⁴ In the context of the United States, unmarked characteristics include whiteness and an unaccented (or an American accented) English fluency. Although Bucholtz and Hall use this to demonstrate the power dynamics within societies, I believe that this concept of markedness can be applied

⁵² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Harvard University Press, 1984), 2. (Emphasis in original)

⁵³ Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall, "Language and Identity," in *A Companion to Linguistic Anthropology*, (Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2005; 2007), 381.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 372.

to all countries as an extension of the binary us vs. other. In Korea, unmarked characteristics would be being East Asian and speaking fluent Korean. Furthermore, due to Korea's homogeneous demographic and history as a "hermit kingdom," any foreign behavior that departs from the traditional norm can become a marked symbol of the Other.

Overview of Study Methodology

As the purpose of this study is to reveal the differences in self-identity and cultural negotiation amongst the Korean study abroad students who are often categorized under a single umbrella of "Korean students" or even more generally, "International students," I chose to engage in an in-depth case study of eight undergraduate students at Duke University. Although a survey would have allowed me to target a wider population of Korean students, I felt that an in-depth case study, albeit smaller in sample size, would lead to a more substantial insight given the sensitive nature of the topics examined. Indeed, for one of my focal study questions- "How does being called "Americanized" make you feel?"- the survey results of a semantic differential scale ranging from 0 (Unpleasant) to 10 (Pleasant) would not give any insight into the rationale behind their emotions, which is arguably much more important than the reactions themselves.

Duke University, the site of the study, is a large research university in North Carolina with 6,495 undergraduate students. It is a self-described "community of

exceptionally talented learners,"⁵⁵ recognized as the seventh best university in the United States.⁵⁶ Over the course of three weeks, I recruited participants for my study through the Duke Korean Undergraduate Student Association (KUSA), which I have been an active member in since freshmen year. The KUSA Facebook group boasts 394 ethnic Korean members consisting of both current students and alumni, and my study recruitment was received with enthusiasm undoubtedly due to my personal acquaintance⁵⁷ with over 60% of the group members. Ten students volunteered from seeing the post alone, and I personally approached four additional students whose backgrounds I felt would add to my study.

As shown in Table 1, I selected two students from each of the four high school types- Korean Public, Korean Specialized, US Public, and US Private. Although there are a small number of Korean students who come from other countries such as Singapore and New Zealand, the great majority of students belong to one of the four categories that I have selected. It should be noted that "Korean Private" was not designed as a separate high school type, as private high schools and public high schools have no significance difference in South Korea. All Korean high schools receive government subsidies, making the tuition difference between public and private schools unsubstantial. The selection process is also the same, as students are arbitrarily placed in either school type by each region's ministry of education.

⁵⁵ Duke University, "Academic Excellence: Academically Rigorous, Strongly Supportive," accessed April 9, 2014, <http://admissions.duke.edu/experience/excellence>.

⁵⁶ "National University Rankings," *U.S. News and World Report*, accessed April 8, 2014, <http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/best-colleges/rankings/>.

⁵⁷ In this case, I define personal acquaintance as being "Friends" on the social network site. As of January 2013, 235 of the 394 members are my "Friends."

Perhaps most importantly in the context of this study, there is virtually no difference in the core curriculum, as all schools teach to the annual College Scholastic Ability Test.

Table 2: Participant Data

Name ⁵⁸	Grade	High School Type	Citizenship	Interview Language ⁵⁹	Years in U.S.
Hyejin	Junior	Korean Public	Korean	Korean	3
Wanny	Alumni	Korean Public	Korean	Korean	12
Sung Min	Senior	Korean Specialized	Korean	Korean	8 ⁶⁰
Sarah	Senior	Korean Specialized	Korean	Korean/English	9
David	Senior	U.S. Public	Korean	English	14
Josh	Junior	U.S. Public	Dual	Korean/English	8
Andrew	Senior	U.S. Private	American	English	10
Song Yi	Senior	U.S. Private	Korean	Korean	6

Each interview ranged from 60 to 90 minutes, based on a list of unstructured questions to prompt their responses.⁶¹ Based on the students' responses, additional questions were asked that deviated from the original list. Topics such as the motivation for studying abroad ("When/Why did you decide to study abroad?") were addressed in narrative responses, whereas others topics such as language skills ("Do you feel more comfortable speaking one language over another?") were explored through a series of short responses. The interview was conducted in the

⁵⁸ All names are pseudonyms.

⁵⁹ I translated all interviews conducted entirely or partially in Korean to English for in-text citations.

⁶⁰ Two of the eight years were spent in the Korean Augmentation To the United States Army. I included his years in service towards his "years in U.S." because the U.S. Army base in Korea operated by the United States and forbidden from Korean civilians, and his interactions with his U.S. army peers gave him exposure to the U.S. culture and the English language.

⁶¹ The list of interview questions can be found in the appendix. The interview was conducted verbally and the participants did not see the provided list of questions.

language of the participant's choice (between Korean and English), to allow them to express their opinions in the most comfortable setting possible.

Previous studies on minority groups suggested that subjects took a greater risk in a given task when overseen by a researcher of the same race.⁶² In the context of ethnographic studies of Korean study abroad students, this explains why previous studies were conducted by, or in collaboration with ethnic Korean researchers. The presence of a Korean researcher who has built a trust relationship with the subjects appeared to be instrumental in gathering constructive anecdotes and opinions, and I met both conditions (Korean, trust relationship), which allowed me to conduct one-on-one interviews with ease.

I had varying levels of familiarity with the subjects' backgrounds, but my shared status as a Korean study abroad student allowed for a mutual exchange of opinions on all the issues asked; in certain cases, my confidence of a personal anecdote triggered the student to share his or her own experiences for reflections. The fact that no participant opted out of a single question- even sensitive ones regarding personal struggles, racial issues and family relations- suggests that the study provides a privileged glimpse into the minds of Korean study abroad students.

The following two chapters will be devoted to providing the vivid narratives of the participants, with analysis that supports my argument that identity formation is fluid and context-dependent in both the process of othering and identity practice/performance.

⁶² Bradley, Larry, CR Snyder, and Martin Katahan, "The Effects of Subject Race and Sex and Experimenter Race upon Classroom-Related Risk-Taking Behavior," *Psychonomic Science* 28, no. 6 (1972): 362-4.

CHAPTER TWO: DEFINING SELF, DEFINING THE OTHER

My Story

When I first arrived in California as a third grader, my younger brother and I were the only two Korean students in the entire school. As the first international student, the other students' curiosity and desire to befriend me made up for my lack of English skills. My slightly foreign clothes, my brown bag lunches that included Korean snacks and *kimbab* (a Korean sushi roll), and my electronic dictionary all captivated the students, who would ask me to point out Korea in the classroom globe. After one semester, I started fourth grade with a near-fluency of the English language, and internalized the American culture as my own. I watched Lizzie McGuire, took turkey sandwiches as my lunch, revamped my wardrobe with Limited Too and Sketchers sneakers. As there were virtually no minority students at school, my friend group consisted solely of Caucasian girls. Because I was friends with them, I naturally felt that I was "one of them." I was confident and comfortable in my skin, but I also firmly believed that I was just as American as my friends. I began to lose my Korean mother tongue, speaking solely in English with my siblings and parents. My desire to become American manifested in many ways- I would put my hand over my chest proudly singing the 'Star-Spangled Banner', and prefer to buy snacks at Safeway rather than the Korean supermarket.

Now that I have spent over a decade in America, however, my experience at Duke is quite different from that in California. When I traveled to Durham from my Californian boarding school, my older sister, three years my senior, told me that I

will “only hang out with Koreans in college.” As much as I found it difficult to believe at the time (my close friend group in high school did not include any Koreans), as a senior at Duke I have to admit that she was right. I considered myself an American in elementary school, but as a college student I identify solely as a Korean, and view Americans as the Other that I merely have an understanding of. In this chapter, I explore the narratives of five students’ study abroad experiences, focusing on their key turning points and how these students position themselves in relation to the Other. Understanding how the student perceive their surroundings and their experiences will serve as a stepping stone to gaining a deeper insight to the students’ self-identity.

Terminology

Before diving into the students’ narratives, it is first necessary to define the endemic terminologies that the participants used to describe the different groups within the Korean student spectrum. The three largest groups can be identified as *yuhakseng* (유학생; study abroad students), *oegoseng* (외고생; foreign language school students), and Korean Americans (KA). There are also two smaller subsets, which are international school students (composed of students who attended international school in Korea or any other non-English speaking country) and Korean high school graduates.

It should be noted that although the term *yuhakseng* technically refers to the entire group in question, this term is used by non-ESA⁶³ students to describe their peers who have studied abroad from a young age. As Abelman observes, “Some of these [*yuhakseng*s] will be quite bicultural and bilingual; others might even be considerably more acclimated to the American youth scene than the South Korean one; and others still might remain squarely in the “Korean” youth scene, despite considerable time abroad.”⁶⁴ This discrepancy within the *yuhakseng* group, most notably between the graduates of public and private schools, exists due to the financial and life style differences in attending a boarding school and living with a guardian figure.

Oegoseng, on the other hand, literally means “foreign language high school students,” but is colloquially used to include students from other specialized high schools. Examples of other schools include Korean Minjok Leadership Academy (KMLA), an elite boarding school devoted to nurturing global leaders. Thus the term *oegoseng* is interchangeable with the term *teukmogoseong*, which means “students of specialized high schools.” However, although these specialized high school graduates are commonly grouped together because of their shared experiences in Korea’s competitive educational landscape, students in the same *oegoseng* category also form niche connections and at times try to distance themselves from graduates of different schools.

⁶³ ESA: Early Study Abroad, referring to students who came to America before college.

⁶⁴ Abelman, “Undergraduate Korean Americans and “Korean Koreans” in the Millennial American University,” 3-4.

The last main group, KA, commonly refers to Korean students whose families have immigrated to America; these students have US citizenship and a cultural fluency. However, because there are students who belong to the *yuhakseng* or *oegoseng* group but also have American citizenship through birthright (being born during their parent's brief sojourn in America and returning to Korea before attending American schools), the boundaries between the three groups can be blurry. The two smaller groups- international school students and Korean high school students- are self explanatory in terminology, but a notable fact is that because the number of students in these subsets are very limited, these students identify themselves in relation to the three major groups identified above, citing their differences with one and similarities with another. While this structure may not encompass the entirety of the Korean student population, it can certainly be used to categorize the majority of Korean populations in any American university, and is a helpful framework in understanding the complex structure of Korean student societies. Finally, it must be emphasized that while these subsets do exist, it does not necessarily mean that students form their social groups according to these boundaries, as will be evident in the students' stories.

Additionally, outside of the Korean study abroad student spectrum, the students also used a terminology called Korean Koreans, referring to ethnic Koreans who attend Korean schools and live in Korea. This group was identified as being the most different from the Korean Americans, and most similar to the small cohort of study abroad students hailing from Korean public high schools. In most cases, the

students referred to the Korean Koreans to make comparative statements about their identities.

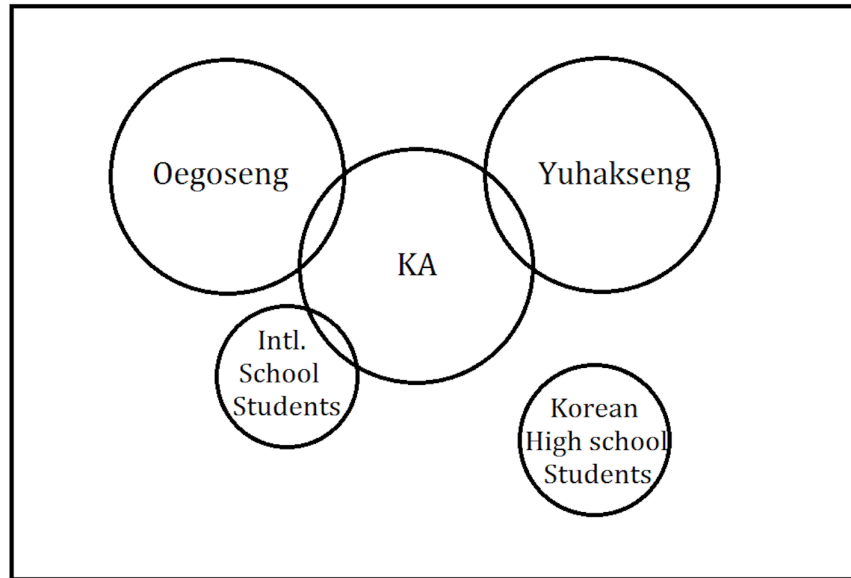


Figure 4: Korean Student Groups. *Source:* Author's rendering.

Student Narratives: Who is the Other?

Sung Min

Sung Min was born in Korea, but lived in North Carolina for three years from when he was twelve years old with his parents during his father's tenure as a visiting professor. Despite this early exposure, however, Sung Min did not identify himself as a *yuhakseng*, but rather identified his in-group as the *oegosengs*, with whom he had a shared adolescent environment. What was particularly significant about Sung Min's narrative was that his perception of the Other shifted between his first and second stages of study abroad, which were in the same geographic area. This suggests that the social context that influences identity formation is not limited

to the environment itself, but more importantly, the specific individuals within the community that the one is in contact with.

He explained how his perception of the Other changed between his first study abroad experience and Duke:

In my pre-college years, I was able to hang out with American kids really well. It was fun to hang out with them, and everything just clicked. Being conditioned to this memory, I thought it would be the same at college, but when I arrived at Duke I realized that it was completely different. Compared to my high school kids, hanging out with American kids wasn't fun, because there wasn't as much of a connection. (Sung Min, interview with author, 2014)⁶⁵

This quotation illustrates a transition from having no perceived difference between ethnicities, to an acute perception of “Americans” as the Other. As with all other students who noted a difference in the relationship depth between Koreans and non-Koreans, Sung Min claimed that there was a deeper connection between Koreans that he could not duplicate with non-Koreans. To borrow his words, Sung Min considered his distance from the “mainstream” culture as a voluntary choice, one that he had made because “hanging out with American kids wasn’t fun.”

What had caused this shift? I point to his formative adolescent years, when he returned to Korea for middle and high school. During this time, it is evident that Sung Min developed a firm identity as a Korean, not just ethnically but as a national identity.

I'm completely Korean. I would say I'm 90~95% similar to Korean Koreans in the way I speak or behave, whereas I am completely different from Korean Americans. Not similar at all. I can't say exactly how, or in

⁶⁵ Sung Min's interview was originally conducted in Korean. I translated the interview transcript for the in-text usage. All translated excerpts were italicized to visually separate them from the English interviews.

what ways we differ... Even the party culture, for example, I prefer the Korean style parties. (Sung Min 2014)

In this statement, Sung Min made the connection between his ethnic identity and his national identity, citing speech, behavior, and parties as examples. It is noteworthy that Sung Min distanced himself from Korean Americans as the intra-ethnic other, which echoes a 2010 survey by Korea's East Asia Institute in which a surprising 43.9% of participants stated that ethnic Koreans without Korean citizenship residing in foreign countries are "almost strangers" to Korea.⁶⁶ Indeed, it appears that the combination of nationality in *addition* to ethnicity is required in the minds of Koreans for an individual to be authentically Korean.

When asked about the difference between *oegosengs* and *yuhaksengs*, Sung Min replied,

Most of my friends are oegosengs, but I also do have some yuhakseng friends. I think what connects us oegosengs together is the fact that we have many common denominators. We had the same life trajectory- we went through the specialized high school system, prepared for American colleges together, and ended up at the same university. (Sung Min 2014)

It is important to note that when he compares *yuhaksengs* and *oegosengs*, he focuses on his greater similarity with the *oegosengs* rather than his differences with the *yuhaksengs*. In other words, he is not strictly distancing himself from *yuhaksengs* as the Other, because he does not identify the differences that are necessary in the othering process. It seems that there is a clear hierarchy in Sung Min's mind: at each end of the spectrum, there are the "Americans" representing the Other and the

⁶⁶ Wontaek Kang, "Hanguksahoeui Gukgajeongcheseonggwa Minjokjeongcheseongui Byeonhwa [Korean Society's National Identity and the Changes in Ethnic Identity]," in *Hangugin, Urineun Nuguinga? [Korean, Who are we?]* (Seoul: The East Asia Institute, 2011), 16.

oegosengs representing the in-group, and in between the two there are Korean Americans, who are the intra-ethnic Other, and the *yuhaksengs* that are neither the Other nor the in-group.

Andrew

Reflecting on the onset of his study abroad, Andrew exhibited intra-ethnic othering, through which he differentiated himself from his former classmates at the Korean international school. As his study abroad environment shifted, his earlier intra-ethnic othering remained, but he developed a new awareness of a Caucasian American Other. Through Andrew's narrative, it is apparent that context and contact are key elements in the process of othering.

Andrew was born in the United States while his father was completing a fellowship in California. Upon returning to Korea, his parents enrolled him in an international school, where he completed K-8. Andrew described his international school experience as follows:

It's pretty different. It's really hard to explain unless you went there. It's like a hybrid of American culture that is still influenced by Korean factors. There are a lot of kids at [international school] who were worse than me at both English and Korean. (Andrew, Interview with author, 2014)

This "hybrid culture" that Andrew identified has been theorized by Ruth Useem as the "third culture," identifying the international school student as a third culture kid (TCK) who "develops a sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any."⁶⁷ However, the international students that Andrew speaks of

⁶⁷ Pollock & Van Reken, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up among Worlds*, 13.

have one important distinction from the typical “third culture kid” - Useem’s definition of states that the TCK is an individual who grew up “in a culture other than the parents’ culture,” whereas Andrew’s international school peers were ethnically, and even nationally, Korean. This is due to the aforementioned English Fever amongst Korean parents, as many families elect to send their child to international schools in preparation for, or as an alternative to study abroad. Although these Korean students are growing up in their motherland, they develop a hybrid culture from the international school bubble, emulating a study abroad experience. However, Andrew pointed out important differences between study abroad and international school- both academic and cultural. Starting with the academic, he commented, “even the teachers were somehow influenced by Korean culture. I don’t know if it’s because the [Korean] parents were notorious for being pretty crazy.” I asked Andrew if this meant that international school students experienced a similar academic environment to Korean-Korean students, such as after school tutors and *hagwons*⁶⁸, to which he replied,

Not necessarily, but [the parents] were just more uptight [in comparison to American ones]. A lot more emphasis on grades. And yeah, I mean, looking back, I had fun at [international school], but then there’s not too much that I miss. I love some of the people I went to school with, but in terms of the actual school, I’m really glad I left after middle school. (Andrew 2014)

He continued to explain why he was grateful for commencing his study abroad in 9th grade:

⁶⁸ *Hagwons* are private tutoring academies. There is a wide variety of subjects taught through such institutions, from school subjects such as English, mathematics and Korean to specialized courses on music, reading comprehension, debate, and numerous standardized tests such as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language).

Kids who go to international school for a long time- they don't know how to connect with Koreans, but they also don't know how to do that with Americans once they come to college. In high school, they think they do, but once they come to college, they realize that they don't fit in with American students. It's literally a bubble; I think that's a bit unfortunate. That's what I meant by kids who are worse than me at both Korean and English. (Andrew 2014)

It should be noted that Andrew grouped the international school students as "they" rather than a "we," although he spent the majority of his schooling in this environment. This usage suggests that he is distancing himself from the international school students who "don't fit in," and that he believes that the four years of ESA have differentiated him from his previous classmates.

Andrew confessed that he didn't always have a positive opinion of study abroad- when he first came to America as a ninth grader, he suffered from homesickness and regretted the decision to leave Korea. He stated, "I really didn't like living by myself, I think I was too young at the time. Of course I wanted to keep the American education going, but that was when I really wanted to stay in Korea and just go to international school." It was only in retrospect, after he was able to compare his college experience with that of the international school students, that he realized that he was more fortunate for going through ESA.

Andrew compared his two study abroad experiences- the first in boarding school and the latter at Duke, as follows:

My high school- it's really small- 100 kids per grade- so you basically know everyone. Even kids you don't think you'd be friends with, when you're living with them for four years, chances are you're going to know them pretty well. So I think in that sense, it's not like I had that much choice to say who my friend is and isn't; I don't have that kind of a personality to make enemies. But in college, there is definitely more freedom in who you choose to have around you [*sic*]. For me, I feel like in a way it's pretty similar. I

wouldn't say my friend groups changed, but I'm just around more Koreans. Freshmen year I knew some Koreans but a lot of the kids I became friends with were kids in my dorm that I went out with a lot, but then after they started joining fraternities which I didn't, I'm still friends with them- I sometimes go to their houses or whatever, but they started to seclude themselves. I think it's kind of natural once they join fraternities. (Andrew 2014)

He started by identifying the difference in size, and how the large student body allows for a greater freedom when choosing one's friend group. It is interesting that he claimed his friend groups have not changed while simultaneously admitting to being "around more Koreans." Indeed, Andrew stated that only one of his five closest friends in high school had been Korean, whereas *all* but one of his five closest friends in college is Korean. This may be attributed to the new sense of the Other that Andrew recognized upon arriving to college:

When I came to Duke, there were some white kids I couldn't connect with. The preppy white kids from the northeast. I went to a boarding school but I was still in California [so it was different from the East coast prep school kids.] It was just really different. How they think, how they behave, what their personality is. (Andrew 2014)

Comparing the Caucasian East coast students with Korean students, Andrew stated, "If I made the effort, I think I could connect with all Koreans, but with [the northeast prep kids], I think they're really different."

From his interview, I could identify two main turning points: the first onset of study abroad and his arrival to Duke. The small school environment helped Andrew develop relationships with all of his classmates regardless of citizenship or race, which helped him adjust and establish a separate identity from his previous international school peers. On the other hand, it seems that upon arrival to Duke, he came in contact with Caucasian American students with whom he felt an

unbreachable difference, and realized that there is yet another distinction between certain students in the mainstream White culture, and repositioned himself by connecting with more Korean students.

Song Yi

Song Yi described herself as a “representative of Korea” to the world. Consequently, any group that is not associated with Korea becomes an Other from the inherent ethnic difference. Although she appreciated the American education she received, she maintained her distance herself from American culture and consciously chose not to assimilate. Interestingly, while this inter-ethnic Other remained constant from the beginning, her understanding of the intra-ethnic other shifted by context. Influenced by her ESA peers at boarding school, she had dismissed *oegosengs* and Korean Americans as an intra-ethnic other; it was only in a new social context -Duke- that she came into contact with them and realized that the designation of the Other was not as clear as she had originally believed. Song Yi is an important example of how students’ process of othering may also become more inclusive based on context.

Song Yi was born and raised in Korea until the end of tenth grade. Growing up, she and her parents had never considered study abroad as a possibility, perhaps due to fact that Song Yi was a very successful student in the Korean educational system. However, this all changed in tenth grade when one of Song Yi’s closest friends (whom she attended an English academy with) developed an interest in American boarding schools. Both of them were living the typical life of a Korean high

school student, with schedules packed with endless studying and very little sleep. Unsurprisingly, the thought of being able to do extra curricular activities, sports, while also having a mandatory sleeping schedule struck the girls with a huge appeal. Song Yi recalled arduously preparing for her final exams so that she could confidently announce her new plans to her parents.

I did really well on my finals- I ranked first. So I took that to my mom and told her that I wasn't seeking to study abroad as an escape, but for greater success. She was so taken aback because it was so sudden, and because I was so determined. At the time, I hadn't known how expensive study abroad was, and thought that it was a simple matter of going to America . . . After researching for one week, I immediately filed a leave with my Korean high school- it was the week before winter vacation. (Song Yi, interview with author, 2014)⁶⁹

Song Yi claimed that study abroad was not an “escape” for her, and this is certainly true if evaluated on the conventional definition of a *dopeeyuhak* (도피유학; literally translated as “studying abroad to escape”), which is an academically underperforming student going abroad for better prospects. This is an important distinction, as she was not seeking to disassociate herself from Korea; in a sense, she was a model Korean student trying to serve as an ambassador of Korean academic excellence.

Of the students in the sample, Song Yi is very unique in the sense that she started her ESA journey at such a late age. Whereas all the other students in the sample who underwent ESA had some form of American schooling in elementary school or middle school at the latest, Song Yi started her study abroad as a

⁶⁹ Song Yi's interview was originally conducted in Korean. I translated the interview transcript for the in-text usage. All translated excerpts were italicized to visually separate them from the English interviews.

sophomore in high school. It appears that this late onset period allowed her to develop a stronger attachment to Korea, and this firm awareness of the in-group impacted her mindset going into study abroad.

I came to America with the purpose of bringing the spotlight to Korea, to represent Korea to the world . . . Because I was always very Korean, I didn't try to accept America and kept to my Korean roots . . . I'm still in the process of learning the American culture. It was only last semester (the first semester of senior year in college) that I started to open up to America. Before then, I really couldn't feel much jeong⁷⁰ for America. I viewed it very negatively. (Song Yi 2014)

In this narrative, Song Yi expressed that her intention, from the very beginning, was not to assimilate, but to represent Korea to the “world.” Indeed, other parts of Song Yi’s narrative echoed a similar dissociation from the American culture; one notable example is her experimentation and rejection of an English name. She stated: “When I first came, I picked an English name- Jenny- but I’ve been called Song Yi my entire life and I couldn’t feel *jeong* for any other name.” Adopting a new name is one of the key characteristics of cultural assimilation,⁷¹ and her refusal to be identified by a new English name indirectly shows her defiance to cultural assimilation.

Her refusal to assimilate stemmed not only from her strong affiliation with Korea, but her othering of “foreigners,” which I interpret as non-Koreans. During our interview, she openly stated that she “was afraid of white people.” She followed that statement with further explanation of her concept of the Other:

⁷⁰ The concept of *jeong* was defined in Chapter 1 as “a Korean word describing the complex emotional bondage between two people” (Chung & Cho, “Significance of “Jeong” in Korean Culture and Psychotherapy,” 2.)

⁷¹ “Adopting names that sounded more American might help immigrants speed assimilation, avoid detection, deter discrimination or just be better for the businesses they hoped to start in their new homeland.” (Sam Roberts, “New Life in U.S. No Longer Means New Name,” *The New York Times*, Aug. 25, 2010, accessed April 14, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/26/nyregion/26names.html>.)

I was afraid of white people. I'm still scared of foreigners, but [when I first arrived,] everyday was a struggle . . . I think yuhaksengs/Korean Americans/Korean Koreans are all very different . . . There are individual differences within the groups, of course, but each group as a whole is different [even if they are all ethnically Korean] because they grow up in a different environment. (Song Yi 2014)

She identifies foreigners as the predominant Other, while also acknowledging the differences that exist within the Korean community. When asked which group she identified with, she hesitated but replied that she considers herself a *yuhakseng*.

I guess I am a yuhakseng now? Like I said, I was always very Korean and didn't accept America. Korea was really, being Korean was really important and I thought I was at the end of the "Korean-ness" spectrum, but now I feel different from Korean Koreans. I feel more comfortable with yuhaksengs. (Song Yi 2014)

From this excerpt alone, it appears that Song Yi has determined non-*yuhakseng* Koreans as the Other, but this was quickly proven to be false. When asked why she hesitated to respond, she revealed an important shift within her understanding of the intra-ethnic other.

When I came to Duke, my yuhakseng friends told me that I shouldn't hang out with oegosengs. But I met them and we got along really well- they understood certain parts of my "Koreanness." I felt like I discovered a huge connecting link [with the oegosengs]. They knew about the Korean schools. . . my yuhakseng friends at [boarding school] went to middle school in America or Singapore so they didn't really understand certain things. (Song Yi 2014)

Song Yi demonstrates that while her affinity with the *yuhaksengs* led her to consider them as her in-group, a social group with similar characteristics, her determination of the Other, the group defined by differences, has become blurry over the course of her study abroad experience. The importance of social context, while not obvious, is present through the fact that even within the study abroad experience, the

university setting provides contact with a wider spectrum of the Korean subgroups and leads to a shift in the process of othering.

Hyejin

Hyejin is similar to Song Yi in many ways in that they both identify Caucasian Americans as the Other, and affiliate themselves with *yuhaksengs*. However, comparing their narratives reveals a clear difference between these two students who appear very similar at the surface level. Hyejin demonstrates that even if the definition of the Other remains the same (*oegosengs*), her identity –and her perception of the in-group- still shifts based on social context. In other words, although Hyejin considered *oegosengs* as the Other since she was a regular high school student in Korea, the group that she affiliates with shifts from Seoul (Korean Koreans) to Durham (*yuhaksengs*).

Hyejin applied to Duke with no former study abroad experience, driven by the desire to swim in a bigger pond. When she first arrived in America, she recalls, “When I first got off the plane, all I could see were white people. I thought to myself, “Wow, this is really America.” After a few days, I got used to [seeing white people,] especially because they were so friendly.” However, although she found Caucasians friendly at first, she quickly realized that there was a pronounced difference between Koreans and Caucasians, as well as a “subtle difference” between Koreans and other Asians.

I think we're different from white people. It's difficult to build a deep, meaningful relationship with them. Linguistic differences aside, [differences in] ideology and tendencies create a limit in how close you can get to them. Even with other Asian students, it is not completely the

same. There is a subtle difference, things that can only be expressed in Korean, the Korean jeong. (Hyejin, interview with author, 2014)⁷²

This othering of non-Asians is certainly not unique to Hyejin, as noted in Andrew and Song Yi's narratives. However, whereas the aforementioned students primarily used the Other to define themselves in relation to their differences, Hyejin used othering to align herself with one group and separate herself from another.

Oegoseng students have that distinctive competitive psyche; I feel like they've been that way from high school. Even though they are in America, I think they're still affected by Korea's education frenzy. I personally don't like talking about academics when I'm having a meal or hanging out, but they are always stressed out and always talk about schoolwork.

My high school in Korea was not very academic. Kids were awed when I solved my SAT math problems, because I was doing math in English! (Laughing) Kids were really into PE, more than anything else. I really detest the education-obsessive mindset, and my mom did too, which is why I think I was able to avoid that even while growing up in Korea. (Hyejin 2014)

In this passage, she suggests that while she is directly from Korea, she shares little in common with the *oegoseng* group because her school was drastically different from theirs, which she pins as the Other. Because she identified *oegosengs* as a different social group when she was attending a regular high school in Korea, it is likely that this construct of the Other carried over. When asked about the group that she most easily identifies with, Hyejin picked the *yuhaksengs* because they "know when to play and when to study." She continued to express slight envy of the American high school life, stating that "if [she] were to go back in time, [she] might have wanted to

⁷² Hye Jin's interview was originally conducted in Korean. I translated the interview transcript for the in-text usage. All translated excerpts were italicized to visually separate them from the English interviews.

do ESA.” By othering the *oegoseng* group and their academic focus, Hyejin aligned herself with the *yuhaksengs* who she felt exhibited a more balanced lifestyle.

David

David presents yet another example of a Korean study abroad student, mainly one who consciously chose to identify Koreans as the Other. However, this decision to differentiate himself from the “uncool” Korean students shifted in the university setting, in which he narrowed his concept of the Other to *yuhaksengs* and accepted Korean Americans as part of his in-group.

David was born in a small city outside of Seoul called Paju.⁷³ In fourth grade, he moved to Houston, Texas with his mother and older sister because his family believed that “education in America would be better than education in Korea.” For David, moving to America was an exciting opportunity not because of the new environment or even extracurricular activities, but rather because “Pokémon was a big thing when [he] was in fourth grade, and Pokémon episodes were a little ahead in the US than in Korea.”

Although David spoke limited English at the time of his arrival in Texas, he “was able to make American friends right away” through sports and games, which both did not require much verbal communication.

My first day of fourth grade started on my birthday- August 20th- but I couldn't tell them it was my birthday. The teachers give out little bags with candy on kids' birthdays, but it wasn't until the day almost ended that I said, “Uhh... birthday.” I remember staring at the electronic watch that my mom got me as a birthday gift because I didn't know what else to do. Back then we didn't really have electronic

⁷³ Hometown replaced for participant anonymity.

dictionaries, so [learning English] was difficult. One way I could connect with the other student was through soccer- you didn't need to talk during soccer . . . And I think Pokémon was a big thing. The first time I hung out with someone who wasn't Korean was over Pokémon. Gameboy you don't really need to talk. I think I kept myself occupied without having to speak English. (David, interview with author, 2014)

Although David quickly picked up English ("I was exponentially better at English after year 1. After year 2, I was comfortable. After year 3, I was in English Honors") and the Pokémon fad died away, sports remained as a central aspect of David's American experience. When asked about what he thought was the biggest benefit of an American education, he instantly replied, "sports."

There was no opportunity in [Korea] for me to play sports- maybe there were in Seoul, but not in Paju. In America, I was able to play sports with an official uniform, a referee... I really enjoyed that part. It was me [*sic*] doing things I liked, and it being counted towards going to college. And I think I appreciated this more as I got older- 8th, 9th, 10th grade. My dad once told me, after seeing me play basketball, that his teacher called him out in school for playing basketball back in his schooldays [in Korea]. In America it's encouraged, it's a privilege, to play basketball for your school. (David 2014)

Playing sports not only helped David adjust to his new life in America, but it also helped him become a part of the mainstream culture in middle and high school. As he notes, being a jock was a "privilege" that allowed him to disassociate himself from other Korean students.

You know what's funny, I think for the longest time I really wanted to be American, purposefully avoided Korean things, up until I got to college. Because in middle school or high school, or in general, being cool meant non-Asian, essentially. I was fairly successful at that game because I played sports. My friends were all white . . . I purposefully made that decision. At my high school there was a Korean clique, but I chose to separate myself from them and hang out with the "cool" kids. I was always friendly with them and liked talking with them now and then, but I didn't want them to be my main [group]. (David 2014)

As shown in the above excerpt, David separated himself from the Korean clique during his ESA years. In other words, David viewed the Korean clique as the Other, while his main group of friends remained “all white.” David was the only participant in the sample who expressed the sentiment of “[wanting] to be American,” and this desire was reflected through alienating what he perceived to be un-American: the Koreans.

College served as a turning point for David, as he started to integrate himself into the Korean student community and embrace his Korean heritage. To borrow his words, this happened as he “developed more self-esteem, thought about who [he] liked and wanted to hang out with rather than what was cool.” He stated that all but one of his closest friends in college were Korean, with the exception being a Chinese American student. However, although David now considered himself “100% Korean,” it appeared that he still perceived a difference between constituents of the Korean student community, and created a new set of the Other within the group.

The economic discrepancy between *yuhaksengs* and me was too big. The way they hang out, most of them, it’s very expensive. Even at Duke a little, but especially in Korea. I just don’t have friends from that group. Economic background distinguishes the Korean *yuhaksengs*, but aside from that, they’re more similar to Korean Koreans than the KAs. (David 2014)

Here, David draws a contrast between the Korean Koreans and the Korean Americans, and between himself and the *yuhaksengs*. This emphasizes the point that othering is not limited to racial or institutional boundaries, but that it occurs within a seemingly homogeneous community such as the Korean student population.

As the student narratives show, the dynamics between various subgroups of the Korean study abroad community leads to both inter- and intra-ethnic othering. By actively identifying other subgroups and ethnicities (mainly Caucasians) as the Other, the students appear to build a stronger affiliation with their in-group. The in-group identification also varied amongst the students, from *oegoseng* and *yuhaksengs* to Korean American. In the next chapter, I will build on this in-group concept by associating it with the students' identity practice, while also providing a contrast with the context-dependent nature of identity performance.

CHAPTER THREE: DEFINING SELF, DEFINING BEHAVIOR

Table 3: Participant Identification Data

Name	Citizenship	Green Card	Self-Identity	Practiced Identity	Years in U.S.
Hyejin	Korean	No	Korean	Yuhakseng	3
Wanny	Korean	No	Korean	Korean Korean	12
Sung Min	Korean	No	Korean	Oegoseng	8 ⁷⁴
Sarah	Korean	Yes	Unsure	Korean American	9
David	Korean	Yes	Korean	Korean American	14
Josh	Dual	N/A	Korean	Yuhakseng	8
Andrew	American	N/A	Unsure	Korean American	10
Song Yi	Korean	No	Korean	Yuhakseng	6

Out of the eight students in the study, seven students possessed a Korean passport. Josh was the only student who had dual citizenship, and Andrew was the only student who had only American citizenship. Andrew was included despite his American citizenship because he identified his home as Seoul, where his entire family has lived for the entirety of his school-age years, making his education in the U.S. “study abroad” from home.

Each student was asked to provide his or her self-identity with the following question: “Do you consider yourself Korean, American, Korean American, or Asian American?” Although the number of years spent in the U.S. ranged from as few as three to as many as 14, all but two students stated that they were Korean. This categorization is an extension of the binary concept of the “us” versus “the Other,” as it highlights one fundamental commonality between the eight students: by college, all had identified one Korean subgroup as their primary in-group. As supported by

⁷⁴ Two of the eight years were spent in the Korean Augmentation To the United States Army. I included his years in service towards his “years in U.S.” because the U.S. Army base in Korea operated by the United States and forbidden from Korean civilians, and his interactions with his U.S. army peers gave him exposure to the U.S. culture and the English language.

Stryker's social structure theory, explained in Chapter One, social identity has a tangible impact on everyday behavior, the identity practice. With this theory in mind, I analyzed the students' narratives, and realized that the in-group was directly linked to the students' identity practice, while the self-categorization of "Korean, American, Korean American or Asian American" revealed the identity that they *consciously* embodied. This conscious categorization, and the corresponding behavior, is the identity performance. Consequently, I chose to focus on each student's conscious identity performance distinguishable from his or her habitual identity practice.

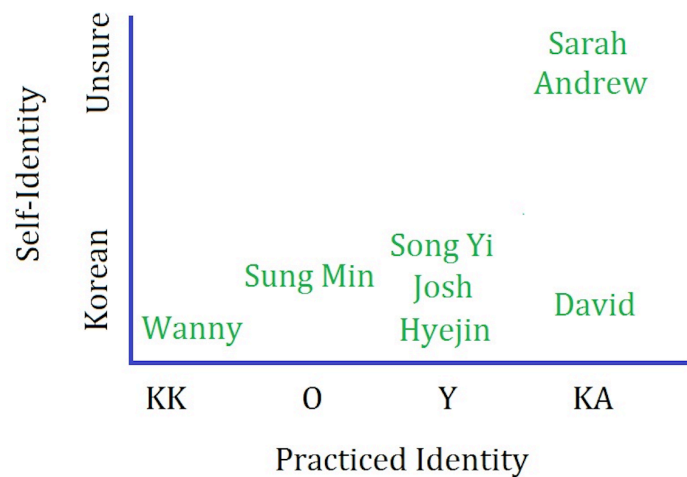


Figure 5: Visualization of the Participant Identification Data.⁷⁵ Source: Author's rendering.

It is important to note that each student's choices in identity practice and performance are unique. Consequently, this chapter is organized by student rather than themes to provide a holistic comparison between the performance and

⁷⁵ KK represents Korean Koreans; O represents *oegosengs*; Y represents *yuhaksengs*; KA represents Korean Americans.

practice. The students' narratives revealed that identity practice and performance is shaped by context, as well as their sense of the Other. Majority of the students exhibited a certain degree of identity performance in order to align themselves to their self-ascribed identity.

Student Narratives: Navigating Dualities

David: Desire to Be Korean

As explored in Chapter Two, David professed his affiliation with the Korean Americans. However, David also expressed a strong desire to be considered as a Korean. This discrepancy is mediated through David's identity performance; his narrative revealed that he performed a Korean (*not* Korean American) identity to behave as an authentic Korean. His practice as a Korean American –fluency in American culture, English and social norms- co-existed with his performance as a Korean –speaking Korean, national loyalty and sensitivity to social hierarchy, suggesting that this duality can coexist. Depending on the social context (e.g. Korean-salient context versus American-salient context), he exhibited his identity practice or his identity performance.

I consider myself 100% Korean. I think my behavior and my culture might be more Korean American, but in terms of that basic consciousness, and the most basic identity- I am a Korean person. It's kind of like even if you put me inside a white person's body, I would be Korean. I think I'm choosing my identity based on which side I'm most loyal to, not in terms of my behavior. (David 2014)

David, a Korean citizen with a US green card, clearly believed that that ethnic identity as a Korean is directly linked to national identity and loyalty; although he has lived in America for the past 14 years and is culturally similar to Korean

Americans, he chose to identify himself as a Korean because that's where his loyalty lies. Plainly put, "if Korea and America got in a war, there is no doubt that [he] would fight for the Korean flag." In that vein, it is easy to understand why David has not obtained U.S. citizenship even when his older sister has, because he one day wants "to prove to other people and [himself] as a Korean" by enlisting in the Korean army. For David, ethnicity was about loyalty and nationality more than cultural similarity.

He appeared to demonstrate his secure understanding and acceptance of his ethnicity by asserting that he is "100% Korean." However, it also appeared that he is "performing" as a Korean due to the discrepancies between his innate Korean American behavior and Korean-Korean culture. As he stated, he was deliberately "choosing" his identity, but this choice unfortunately did not link itself to his identity practice, which he admitted was closer to Korean American.

In Korea I feel more American, because I'm different. There are little accidents that happen because I'm not familiar with culture. When I'm with Koreans I feel more American- they would say something like "your Korean doesn't sound completely natural"- I think I eventually overcame it, but there are still hierarchical issues- like how a younger person should treat an older person. I tried to embrace it, but I don't understand it completely, so I wouldn't act like a Korean person would. Having your hands in your pockets in front of older people- these kinds of little accidents. That's when I feel that I'm Korean, but I exhibit a lot of KA behavior. (David 2014)

Linguistic and cultural fluency plays a significant role in determining one's ability to perform multiple identities; without fluency, it is difficult to pass as a native member of a group, may it be Korean or American. David professed this difficulty by admitting that he is "different" from the natives because his "Korean doesn't sound completely natural" and he is "not familiar with the culture." Although he chose to identify as a Korean and held a Korean passport, being Korean became a deliberate

performance for him, in which he must attempt to disguise his Korean American behavior.

David described both his practice as a Korean American and performance as a Korean as a “conscious choice.” He stated:

I try to tailor to what they are . . . When I’m with Koreans I try to be like them. When I’m with Americans I try to be very American. I think it’s a conscious choice. I think I understand how an American guy acts and how a Korean [one] acts. Well, I think I do have a better understanding of how an American guy acts. I think my tone also changes- for example this interview- the content will be same but the tone will be different. (David 2014)

He performs as a Korean to fit into the Korean community, and especially when he is in Korea, but he also noted that his practice being Korean American gave him “a huge advantage during the recruiting process,” during which he “[tried] to display [his] American side.”

David also stated that he turns “very Korean” when he interacts with his family, who are “all less Americanized.” For them, he performs the role of the Korean son who retains the Korean passport and plans to fulfill the national duty of military service. He stressed that this performance “doesn’t affect [their] relationship,” while simultaneously admitting that he often “[dumbs] down” complex issues to communicate with his family.

His success -in using his American practice during the recruiting process and performing as a Korean within the family- seemed to suggest that this duality of being able to “perform” an alternate identity is mostly positive. However, the following anecdote revealed that this duality also caused conflict, particularly when others did not buy into his “performance.”

I think [Koreans] view me as Korean American . . . I think because my English name is David, it's easier to say than my Korean name (even for Koreans) and I think that's why younger kids, when they talk about me, they never actually use *oppa* or *hyung*.⁷⁶ They just say, "What's up, David" and that bothers me a lot. Not because I want to hear the formalities, but it bothers me that they call my friends by *oppa* or *hyung*-they would *never* say "What's up, Junghyun" while in the same context they would call me just David. I understand that it's because they use an English name for me while they use Korean name for them, but on the other hand, I feel- at the same time- I am Korean, and I speak Korean to you, and as far as you are concerned I am a Korean person to you, so what have I not done to not get what my friends get? Why am I like a "friend" to you? So that's why... I've internalized it- it's because they use an English name for me, and that's it, that's why. But I don't think a lot of people realize that what they do bothers me. (David 2014)

Social hierarchy is very clear in the Korean society, as younger students use formalities to address the older students. In the above excerpt, David expressed his frustration regarding the fact that he is not treated equal to his Korean peers. Although he may feel that he is, "as far as [they] are concerned. . . a Korean person," the actual Korean students treat him by his habitual norm, his Korean American identity. He may choose to identify himself as Korean, but his narratives suggested that his Korean peers perceived him as a Korean American.

Sarah: Performing Two Roles

Sarah presents an interesting example of how a student may exhibit *two* identity performances, fluidly shifting her behavior based on social context. Although Sarah identified her in-group (the group she shares most similarities with), as Korean Americans, her adolescent upbringing in South Korea allowed her to

⁷⁶ *Oppa* is used by females to address an older male, whereas *hyung* is used by males to address an older male. Both words mean "older brother."

perform as an authentic member in both cultures. Sarah travels back and forth between Korea and the United States, which meant that she did not have an opportunity to develop one set identity practice. Because of this fluidity, and her unmarkedness in both societies, it is likely that Sarah's practices and in-between self-identity will undergo another shift based on her post-college social context.

Sarah moved to America a month before elementary school, and spent five years in California before moving back to Korea. She recalled being "extremely unhappy" at the prospects of returning to Seoul, but she was quickly able to readjust to the Korean school system and attended a prestigious foreign language high school in Seoul. When she returned to the United States after six years in Korea, she initially expected her experience to be similar to her grade school days in California; she was confronted with the contrary reality.

I first thought I would hang out with American kids in college too, like I did in elementary school. All the people back in my high school, they were like, "You're so Americanized," "You're going to be in a sorority," "You're going to be really whitewashed." I mean I am in a sorority, but I'm saying that it wasn't like [my expectations.] It was really difficult for me to connect with American kids. (Sarah, interview with author, 2014)⁷⁷

This discrepancy between her expectations and reality appears to stem from whatever changes that Sarah underwent during her adolescent years in Korea. The importance of the adolescent years on identity formation is classified in Erikson's theory of psychosocial development. Through spending her middle and high school years in Korea, Sarah started to develop an identity different from what she picked

⁷⁷ Sarah's interview was originally conducted in a mixture of English and Korean. I translated the Korean portions of the interview transcript for the in-text usage. The translated portions were italicized to distinguish them from the verbatim quotations.

up in her developmental years in California, and her identity practice became infused with Korean norms. Consequently, when she arrived in America, her habitual social norm was different from the mainstream white students.

When asked about her identity, Sarah replied that it was “like a shade of grey” in that she could not relate completely to one group, may it be Korean, Korean American, or American. Although Sarah only held a Korean passport, she also had a green card and spent roughly half her life in America; scholars such as Moon, Lee and Park would agree that Sarah is currently exhibiting an in-between identity, where she understands aspects of both culture but does not feel a full connection to either. Nevertheless, Sarah admitted to deliberately putting on an identity performance.

Personally, I'm very opportunistic- when it's better for me to be FOB-y,⁷⁸ then I'm FOB-y, but when it's better for me to be more American, I can do that too. In class, it's better for me to say, “Oh, I'm an international but I can speak English at this level”- I don't know how to define myself in one word because in a lot of ways I sound KA and I am KA in a lot of sense, but I haven't been in the states for six years before college, so I don't know a lot of the culture. So even the girls in my KA circle, when they talk about this show I don't know, I ask, “What is that?” and then they're like “FOB Sarah.” (Laughing) It's a joke; they don't think I'm a FOB, but yeah. Some slang too, if I don't know them, then I'm “FOB Sarah.” Things like that. (Sarah 2014)

Sarah's response suggested that having an in-between identity may create a state where one's identity practice becomes shadowed by identity performance, and one is constantly making conscious behavioral decisions based on the surroundings.

This phenomenon is illustrated by Sarah's accounts of the instances in which she performs as an American and when she performs as a Korean. As noted in the

⁷⁸ FOB is an acronym for “fresh off the boat,” a slang term that is used to describe new immigrants.

above excerpt, Sarah stated that she performed the role of a well-adjusted international student in the classroom, as she believed that the linguistic unmarkedness – “I can speak English at this level” - gave her an advantage. On the contrary, when Sarah was going through job recruiting, she purposefully left out her Korean name and address on her resume, as to appear as American as possible. Finally, when she was in Seoul, she tried to act as authentically Korean as possible, and did not share the fact that she spent her childhood in California when asked, “Where are you from?” This “highly deliberate and self-aware social display”⁷⁹ occurs for both her identity as a Korean and a Korean American, and it appears that her habitus cannot be neatly categorized. In other words, Sarah’s identity practice itself is a series of performances.

It should also be added that while the primary reason for Sarah’s identity performance is for her self-gain, she also exhibited a certain performance to defy Asian stereotypes and promote a positive image for Koreans.

When I talk to American kids, topics like North Korea come up, and frankly speaking I’m really not interested. But if I’m like, “I don’t know,” then they’ll mistake Koreans as being indifferent so I feel an obligation to know more. I also feel the need to spread awareness culturally, and because of people thinking “She’s an international, she’s not going to fit in,” I want to show people that I can hang out and party like the best of them. (Sarah 2014)

Unlike David, Sarah expressed no conflict resulting from her identity performance, which again is likely due to the fact that she does not have a set identity practice. As exhibited in her continual shift between English and Korean during the interview,

⁷⁹ Bucholtz & Hall, "Language and Identity," 381.

she is fluent in both languages and therefore is unmarked in both cultures. This fluency is an important distinction that allows her to transcend boundaries.

Sung Min: Practice and Performance as a TA

Sarah was not the only respondent who made a conscious behavior choice stemming from identity. Sung Min, a Korean citizen who spent eight years in America, openly admitted to consciously shaping his behavior and activities at Duke to foster a positive image of Koreans in the minds of American students. What is noteworthy about Sung Min's story is that he performs as a model Korean student, meaning that he made conscious behavioral decisions that are separate from his habitual ones from being an *oegoseng*. This desire to represent Korea is heavily dependent on social context, as Sung Min presumably would not make a conscious effort to represent Korea when he is in the Korean environment. It is only within the foreign social context that Duke provides, that Sung Min embraces this identity performance.

When I am TA-ing, I tell students that I am an international student from Korea. Since it's likely that many of the kids- especially white kids- don't have close Korean friends, I feel a responsibility to leave a positive impression. If I prepare well and teach them well, I think their perception of Korean students will also implicitly become more positive.
(Sung Min 2014)

It is interesting that Sung Min attempts to perform as a model Korean student for his peers, especially considering the fact that Sung Min had established non-Koreans as the Other upon his arrival to Duke.⁸⁰ Tellingly, although he put on the façade of the friendly and knowledgeable teaching assistant to his students, internally he still

⁸⁰ Refer back to Chapter Two for further analysis on this topic.

believed that his relationship with American pupils is “superficial” in comparison to that with Korean pupils:

I think I do change [when I teach Korean kids.] I pay more attention; I take greater care. I know that it's not going to be a “Thanks, bye!” after this class is over, since we're in the same Duke Korean community. Now, I'm not saying I give them an unfair advantage or anything, but I do feel a greater motive to help them out, even outside of the classroom or office hours. (Sung Min 2014)

Sung Min's account suggests that identity practice and performance can have a direct correlation to professional behavior. He stated that even his extra curricular involvement at Duke have been shaped by his deliberate choice to be a model Korean student, which is in stark contrast to other college students that elect activities that reflect their interests or post-graduation paths.

Indeed, Sung Min's performance was evident through his involvement in the executive board for the Korean Undergraduate Student Association as well as DoDream, Duke's Korean traditional percussion group, through which he sought to spread awareness of Korean culture on Duke's campus. Furthermore, Sung Min stated that he also represents Korea in the academic setting, from writing a paper on the Korean-Japanese relations to being an exemplary teaching assistant to give non-Korean students a positive image of an international Korean student.

While both his identity practice and performance evolved around a strong Korean identity, it appeared that being in an American college environment has led Sung Min to *display* his Korean pride and heritage through identity performance.

Josh: Torn between Two Names

For the aforementioned two students, their performance was shaped by their linguistic and cultural fluency. For Josh, identity practice and performance was divided by a completely different scheme: his name. Names are one of the most, if not the utmost, important aspects of one's identity. Many study abroad students, including Josh, adopt a new English name upon their arrival to the United States, and yet the significance of this practice has not been explored. Identity practice and performance is an apt framework to analyze this duality, with the given name being the "practice" – a component of daily life – and the English name being the "performance" – a product of study abroad.

Up until 8th grade, Josh had lived by his Korean name, Jaehoon Choi. This was the only identity he knew, and this Jaehoon had been a carefree student who spent more time wrestling around with his friends than studying. When he came to America, however, he was now suddenly Josh Kim; he was adopted into a new guardian family, and given a new name.

As shocking as it is to hear that a family would have a foreign guardian adopt their son to facilitate study abroad, Josh assured me that this was common practice: "there are many kids like me. [If you are adopted by US citizens,] you don't have to go to private school, and you only have to pay a homestay fee. A lot of Korean pastors do this, and even American families." Now in his 8th year living as Josh Kim, he confessed that this performance as an alternate persona has taken a toll on him. He stated,

I want to change my last name [back to Choi,] so that I can receive my degree in my real name. I fought with my host dad a lot over this,

*because he considers me as his own son. To this, my [real] dad said that all that matters is that I know who I am, but still, I want to have my real name back. It's a struggle because I have to file this in court, and I don't know how my host dad will respond to it. (Josh, interview with author, 2014)*⁸¹

Whereas other students are able to incorporate their previous identities with their new ones, for Josh his identity practice and performance cannot be integrated because they are two separate entities with completely different backgrounds. He has never lived in America as Jaehoon, and he has never lived in Korea as Josh. These two identities have each claimed one country: Jaehoon dominates in Korea, while Josh controls his American identity. For example, in America he considers Chicago as his hometown, whereas in Korea he still states Ilsan as his hometown.⁸²

Consequently, although he is currently *performing* as Josh, this is increasingly becoming his norm as the number of years spent in America start to rival his years in Korea, and he is starting to lose his previous identity practice as the carefree Jaehoon. In that vein, it is understandable why Josh seeks to reclaim his Korean name in America, so that he may start to reconcile the two identities. For Josh, identity performance is a conscious choice, but it is not necessarily a voluntary one. His performance is reinforced by the expectations of his guardian family, and as Josh grows apart from his Chicago past, I believe that it is highly likely that Josh will stop performing one identity and embrace one identity practice, as hinted by his desire to retrieve his Korean last name.

⁸¹ Josh's interview was originally conducted in a mixture of English and Korean. I translated the Korean portions of the interview transcript for the in-text usage. The translated portions were italicized to distinguish them from the verbatim quotations.

⁸² Hometowns replaced for participant anonymity.

No two students exhibited identical identity practice and performance.

Although I have examined four students' narratives in detail, all eight students have demonstrated that they have differing ways of adapting their behavior in the new social context of study abroad.

CONCLUSION

Each student included in this study has a unique narrative, a unique process by which they developed their identity. Unlike the conventional definition of study abroad for American students, which involves one semester or one year at most, study abroad for Korean students has virtually become a short-term immigration for many, especially for those who engaged in ESA. Consequently, just as there are varying levels and groups established within the literature of immigrants,⁸³ it is necessary to study these students through an equally complex framework. All too often, these students with drastically different backgrounds are grouped together as a single group of “international students,” ignoring the various characteristics and needs depending on whether a student is a *yuhakseng*, *oegoseng*, Korean Korean, or Korean American.

Limitations

Going into the study, I knew that my research would inevitably have certain limitations due to the nature of my study location. Duke University, as one of the nation’s most selective institutions of higher learning, certainly does not provide a representative sample of the Korean study abroad students in America as a whole. Additionally, as the students volunteered to participate in the study, it is also

⁸³ Immigrants are categorized by a wide range of terminologies ranging from the commonly known first and second generation to the more obscure 1.25 and 1.75 generations, based on the onset age of immigration and the parents’ country of birth.

possible that their experiences in both study abroad and at Duke University have been a positive one that they were happy to share with a researcher.

One of strength and weakness of this study was that it relied heavily upon students' qualitative narratives, which may be skewed from the influence of rosy retrospection, amongst other variables. Because I had an established acquaintance with all of the participants, it allowed them to engage in the interview without a pressure or fear of talking to an "outsider," but this may have also led to a subconscious desire to convey a certain image for the fear of how I may react to certain details they share with me. Nevertheless, the data collected through the interviews included very candid and open anecdotes, which was only possible through a qualitative study of this design.

Finally, there may have been one last limitation stemming from language translation. Because I personally translated all the interview transcripts for usage in this thesis, it is possible that the subtleties and the authenticity of the original Korean narratives may have been compromised, although the translations were done as accurately as possible.

Further Research

The topic of college-aged study abroad students is an understudied one, and there are many possible directions for further research. One that I find particularly interesting is how these students change post-graduation, depending on whether they remain in the United States, return to Korea, or move to a third country. Would

their identity formations be a continuously fluid process, or does Erickson's theory on adolescent identity determination hold fast?

In a similar vein, it would also be worthwhile to study the graduate school study abroad students to compare how they situate themselves in their surroundings and demonstrate their identity in everyday behavior. This was a direction that I had also initially desired to explore through this thesis, but I realized that this group would require a separate focus as the student body for graduate students not only encompassed a much greater age range, but marital status, professional experience, and sense of purpose.

Even on the topic of college-aged study abroad students, I believe that there is still much work to be done to gain an understanding of this group. My analysis of eight students is merely a glimpse into the widely diverse community of Korean students in America, and even a duplicate study conducted in a university with a different racial dynamic or academic focus may yield significant results. Indeed, many of the students in my study noted that their experiences would have been completely different had they attended a small liberal arts college, or a Los Angeles university with a significantly larger Korean population.

Overview of Study and its Significance

Through this study, I first provided an historical and causal overview of the Korean study abroad landscape. Study abroad is rooted in a long history of education being perceived as the only way to success, and aided by English fever, educational quality, as well as the desire to escape "the well." With the background

established, I then analyzed student interviews to evaluate how the students perceived their surroundings through othering. While most of the students (all but two) expressed a strictly Korean identity, the subgroups that each student perceived as the Other varied and shifted based on social context.

With the Other clearly identified, I then sought to further explore the self by comparing the students' identity practice and identity performance. Identity practice is linked to the students' affiliation with the in-group, whereas identity performance exhibited the desire to meet social expectations. Students engaged in identity performance for a multitude of reasons, from wanting to be authentically Korean, taking advantage of identity performance to gain societal benefit, yielding to family pressure, and playing the role of a model Korean student. As these various motives suggest, there is no single cause of why these students employ an identity performance separate from their *habitus*, and it is a complex topic that requires further research.

The in-group/out-group construct and identity practice holds a direct correlation, as the in-group identity shapes one's identity practice. This is unsurprising, given the existing literature on social categorization theory. What is significant, however, is the fact that the students' identity performance is fluid and context-specific, just as the students' perception of the Other. It may also suggest that identity formation and corresponding behavioral changes continue throughout one's life trajectory, especially for mobile groups like Korean study abroad students.

This study holds significance not only for the Korean student population, but also as a telling precedent for the growing numbers of Chinese study abroad

students in America. Gaining a deeper understanding of the complexities in these student groups is a valuable tool for not only university officials, but also American students who engage with international students and the professors who teach and advise them. Korean study abroad students are now a constant –but no longer increasing- presence in the American education landscape, and in this age of international competition, it is in the American university's interest to understand the desires and needs of these study abroad students.

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. Causes, motivations, positives and negatives of study abroad.

- When/Why did you decide to study abroad? Who/what influenced your
- 1 decision?
 - 1a Do you believe that the American education system is superior to the Korean one? Why?
 - 1b Do you think there are strengths in the Korean system that the American one lacks?
 - 1c Were there any factors that made you regret your decision to study abroad?
 - 2 How long have you studied abroad for?
 - 2a If you studied in more than one country or state, did the experience differ significantly?
 - 3 What were the biggest challenges that you faced during your study abroad?
 - 3a Have they changed over time? If so, how are your current challenges different from ones you initially faced?
 - 4 What were the biggest joys of your study abroad experience?
 - 5 Do you intend to send your children abroad?

B. Self Identity and Study Abroad

- Do you go by your given, legal name? If not, what do you go by and
- 1 when/why did you start using this name?
 - 2 Citizenship- dual/Korean/American?
 - 2a If you hold dual, do you consider yourself Korean, American, Korean-American, or Asian-American?
 - Does this perception change based on location? (Duke vs. a) Seoul, Europe, etc.)
 - 2b Do you consider yourself similar to non-yuhakseng Koreans? (As in, are you completely "Korean"?)
 - What does the term Americanized" connote to you? (If I were to say "You are Americanized", what would be your a) reaction? What about "You are not Americanized"? b) What does being Korean mean to you?
 - 2c If you are an American citizen, are there still instances when you consider yourself "Korean"?
 - 2d Do you feel the need to promote your Korean heritage?
 - Linking this back to your background in 2-2a, has this need a) changed from high school/college/grad school?
 - 3 Citizenship- parents?
 - If your citizenship differs from your parents, how does this impact your family dynamics (if at all)? (Consider residency issues, 3a military, importance of political status, etc.)
 - 3b If your parents have not studied abroad in America, how does

impact your relationship and communication with your parents (if at all)?

4 Citizenship- friends?

Please describe your friend group- how diverse are they (racially, ethnically, background, etc.)?

4a

If they are mostly Korean/Asian, why do you think this is

a) the case?

Is there a racial segregation at Duke? If so, is it

b) external/internal/mixture of both?

5 Race

Do you feel more comfortable approaching people of a certain race? If so, why?

5a

When you are with students of a different race, do you feel a

5b pressure to act a certain way? (Be a representative Korean?)

When in Korea, where everyone is presumably Korean, do you

5c find yourself acting differently? Do you feel more at ease?

6 Language

Do you feel more comfortable speaking one language over another?

6a

a) If so, does this impact your academics?

b) If so, does this impact your social life?

c) If so, does this impact your family life?

If so, does your comfort level vary depending on the situation? (Public speaking, academic writing, social

d) settings, professional, etc.)

C. Etc

7 Wrap-up:

On the whole, do you think your opinions are representative of a typical student of your educational background? (If not, please

7a elaborate)

Do you think your experiences would be different if you had attended a different university? (West coast vs. East coast, LAC vs.

7b University, More Koreans, etc)

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